DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 362 674 CE 064 665

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TITLE "Life after Prison." Successful Community Reintegration Programs Reduce Recidivism in Illinois.
INSTITUTION Southeastern Illinois Coll., Vienna. Correctional Education Div.
PUB DATE May 93
NOTE 19p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Education; Agency Cooperation; *Cooperative Programs; *Coordination; *Correctional Education; *Correctional Rehabilitation; Employment Potential; Holistic Approach; Job Skills; Program Development; Program Effectiveness; Program Implementation; Recidivism; *Transitional Programs; *Vocational Rehabilitation
IDENTIFIERS Southeastern Illinois College

ABSTRACT

The Southeastern Illinois College Correctional Educational Division (SIC-CED) begins its involvement at the offender's entry into the correctional institution and continues through the community networking system upon his or her release from the Illinois Department of Corrections. Funding has been awarded for development and implementation of the expanded reintegration program, Community Networking for Offender Reintegration, and Life Skills Employment Awareness Program. To concentrate more thoroughly on a holistic approach to life after prison, SIC-CED has designed its programming to encompass 12 areas of an individual's life: educational, career, family, home, cultural, social, ethical, spiritual, mental, physical, health, and financial. To teach effective communication skills to offenders and to raise their awareness of the outside world, a conference calling system allows prospective mentors, employers, and others to speak directly with offenders via a speaker phone in the classroom. Other components of the transitional program include the following: a networking marketing specialist who coordinates and collaborates services for offenders scheduled for release; mentors; development of an employment portfolio; a computerized database/retrieval system that lists agencies and individuals that help ex-offenders; a statewide community reintegration network; a survival kit presented upon release; incentive awards; and tracking and follow-up of ex-offenders. (Contains 10 references.) (YLB)

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"LIFE AFTER PRISON"

SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY REINTEGRATION PROGRAMS REDUCE RECIDIVISM IN ILLINOIS

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May, 1993

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THE STARFISH

As the old man walked down a Spanish beach at dawn, he saw ahead of him what he thought to be a dancer. The young man was running across the sand, rhythmically bending down to pick up stranded starfish and throwing them far into the sea. The old man gazed in wonder as the young soul again and again threw the small starfish from the sand to the water. The old man approached him and asked why he spent so much time doing what seemed to be a waste of time. The young man explained that the starfish might die if it were left to the morning sun.

"But there must be thousands of miles of beach and millions of starfish. How can your effort make any difference?"

The young man looked down at the small starfish in his hand and as he threw it to safety in the sea, he said, "It makes a difference to this one."

Anonymous

BACKGROUND

The Southeastern Illinois College Correctional Educational Division (SIC-CED) has been in operation since 1976 in Southern Illinois. Vocational and academic programming is available through SIC-CED at the Vienna Correctional Center, a minimum-security, adult-male facility; the Shawnee Correctional Center, a medium-security, adult-male facility; the Hardin County Work Camp, a minimum-security, adult-male facility; and the Illinois Youth Center-Harrisburg, a medium-security, juvenile-male facility. SIC-CED operates the largest correctional education contractual agreement between an Illinois community college and Illinois Corrections School District #428.

LONGITUDINAL STUDY CONDUCTED

In 1982, the Illinois State Board of Education, Department of Adult, Vocational, and Technical Education, invited SIC-CED to participate in a five-year, longitudinal study designed to track ten (10) vocationally-trained offenders upon their release. The tracking system allowed for contact with these individuals to document their experiences during the reintegration process. Results of this study indicated a need to target the main barrier being experienced by offenders after release from prison: the fear of seeking, securing, and retaining employment following incarceration.

SIC-CED & JTPA TARGET OFFENDER EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

In 1983, SIC-CED and the Shawnee Development Council, Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) Program, Service Delivery Area #26,

joined forces to offer a pilot project designed to better prepare a vocationally-certified offender for entering the work force. Prior to 1983, SIC-CED had focused on providing quality vocational and academic training programs without stressing student proficiency in employability skills. The addition of employability skills into all training programs is an extremely successful component of SIC-CED.

From 1983 to 1988, contact was maintained by SIC-CED with JTPA employability skills graduates following their release. Documentation was catalogued regarding experiences, problems, fears, failures and successes encountered during the reintegration process. Results of this five-year, follow-up activity indicated that although education/vocational and employability skills were important, other areas of an individual's life should also be targeted.

ICCB/JTPA CRIMINAL OFFENDER TRANSITION FUNDING AWARDED

In 1989, the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) invited proposals from interested organizations to target criminal offenders and their transition to society. SIC-CED was awarded JTPA funding through ICCB to develop and implement the expanded reintegration program, Community Networking for Offender Reintegration (CNOR).

Since a high percentage of releasees from Illinois prisons return to the Cook County area, Chicago City-Wide College (CCWC) was also awarded funding through ICCB for the purpose of serving criminal offenders through transitional services.

Progressive ICCB/JTPA grant administrators merged the efforts of SIC-CED and CCWC to form the Life Skills Employment Awareness Program (LEAP). Inmates interested in participating in LEAP are required to have completed a vocational training certificate program and the JTPA employability skills training program, and also be willing to continue participation with transitional activities prior to and following release.

HOLISTIC APPROACH INCORPORATED

As an offender approaches release, coping with the reality of life after prison becomes increasingly more difficult. Offenders are often found to have a multitude of problems, barriers, and needs. The issues faced by the offender prior to release and feared by the offender upon release surface during the development of career and transition plans. To concentrate more thoroughly on a holistic approach to life after prison, SIC-CED designed its programming to encompass the following 12 areas of an individual's life:

A. Educational
B. Career
C. Family
D. Home
E. Cultural
F. Social
G. Ethical
H. Spiritual
I. Mental
J. Physical
K. Health
L. Financial

This approach provides a more effective foundation for successful reintegration. By facing barriers and challenges during incarceration, the offender is able to concentrate on more important issues upon return to society: gaining employment, family bonding, and appropriate housing.

THE OUTSIDE CONNECTION

Incarceration not only separates the offender from society but also limits communication and interaction with persons outside the correctional facility. In order for offenders to gain effective communication skills and raise their awareness of the world outside the correctional facility, a conference calling system, The Outside Connection, has been established. Prospective mentors, professional athletes, public figures, employers, financial planners, VIPs and ex-offender assistance agencies telephone the correctional facility and speak directly with the offenders via a speaker phone in the classroom. This interaction allows offenders an opportunity to relate questions, concerns or opinions with the caller. Communication with a person outside of corrections says "someone cares" to the offender. The Outside Connection conference calls instill hope for a positive future upon release, while creating the desire to establish and work toward goals. The motivation and self-esteem of the offender are enhanced through this interaction.

TARGETING OFFENDERS' BARRIERS TO SUCCESS

Even with the extensive training and planning prior to release, offenders still face the absence of basic survival needs. A large percentage of offenders lack suitable housing, appropriate clothing, adequate food, proper transportation, and positive role models upon release from prison.

Through the CNOR program, a network marketing specialist was employed. The network marketing specialist is responsible for coordinating and collaborating services for the offender. Paving

the way through the "maze" of reintegration, the network marketing specialist works diligently to provide a solid network of service providers geared to assist offenders upon release. Highly respected among the inmate population, as well as among state agencies, volunteers, and mentors throughout the State of Illinois, the network marketing specialist truly eases the transition from prison to society for the offender.

MENTORS..THE HELPING HAND

A mentoring component has been incorporated in this unique transitional program. The network marketing specialist also coordinates the mentors utilized within CNOR and LEAP. CCWC mentors visit within the correctional facilities to meet personally with LEAP participants. This one-on-one contact enables a positive rapport to begin between the offender and their mentor prior to release.

For offenders not returning to the Cook County area, volunteer mentors within an inmate's home community serve as role models to ease an inmate's fears, problems, employment issues, and housing concerns. The network marketing specialist serves in an advisory capacity to the volunteer mentors outside the Cook County area.

EMPLOYMENT PORTFOLIO .. A DIARY OF ACHIEVEMENT

Employment portfolios are also developed within the SIC-CED program and shared with CCWC or volunteer mentors, prospective employers, and supportive service agencies. The portfolio is developed to target employment upon release. To quote a represen-

tative of the Illinois Department of Employment Security: "I wish that every person needing a job and desiring services through our agency would come to our office as prepared as the ex-offenders completing your program." The portfolio, A Diary of Achievement, provides written documentation of the accomplishments and successes throughout an offender's life, including incarceration.

The documentation in the portfolio includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Targeted Resume
- Letter of Application
- Vocational Certificates
- Academic Degrees
- Samples of Work
- In-Training Photographs
- Letters of Reference/Support
- Military Service History
- Personal and Professional References
- Targeted Jobs Tax Credit Information
- Prospective Employer Listing
- Awards and Honors
- Transcripts
- Reintegration Plan

The professionally prepared portfolio is an important tool to reinforcing the change of a "negative" part of a person's life into a "positive" experience. The portfolio development process plays an integral part in reinforcing the productive use of time and talents while instilling a sense of accomplishment and raising the level of self-esteem for the offender.

COMPUTERIZED DATA BASE/RETRIEVAL SYSTEM

An extensive, computerized data base and retrieval system has also been implemented to provide a current resource listing of agencies and/or individuals within the State of Illinois that

definitely do help ex-offenders. Only those resources that are actually willing to provide ex-offender assistance are incorporated into the database. The database is designed to provide referral information which can be individualized, based on the offender's geographical location after release from prison.

CHICAGO EX-OFFENDER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Since 1970, the Safer Foundation has been serving the needs of ex-offenders in the Chicago area. The Safer Foundation and its dedicated staff targets job placement, tracking, follow-up, counseling, and supportive service needs of the ex-offender. As an offender makes plans to return to the Chicago area, a definite referral source is the Safer Foundation. This organization not only guides the ex-offender through the maze but eases the weight of barriers faced by returning to society.

STATEWIDE COMMUNITY REINTEGRATION NETWORK

Even with the support of agencies such as the Safer Foundation, a need existed to implement a coordinated and comprehensive network of service providers. The network marketing specialist has been instrumental in the development of the statewide CNOR Advisory Council. This dedicated council actively provides the collaborative link that joins forces of state and local agencies, social service providers, volunteers, ex-offender assistance programs, and religious organizations while systematically meeting the needs of offenders prior to and after release.

CNOR ADVISORY COUNCIL

Mission Statement

To address the personal concerns and enrichment of individuals in the prison population; to impact administrative policies of the criminal justice system and legislative issues; and to promote community awareness and participation in a concerted effort to reintegrate this population with their families and communities.

Objectives

1) To assist in the coordination of existing agencies and resources to reduce recidivism and deter youth from entering the Department of Corrections.

2) To identify and implement programs that assist in the development of positive personal and family relationships.

3) To serve as advocates on legislative matters and concerns affecting men and women during and after incarceration.

4) To become an educational and informational linkage between men and women in prison and the community.

5) To identify individuals, agents, and agencies willing to assist in providing temporary and/or permanent housing opportunities for men and women being released from prison.

6) To identify employers and employment opportunities for men and women being released from prison.

The CNOR advisory council is representative of, but not limited to, the following agencies or groups:

- Alternative Sentencing Approach Program
- Anderson Financial Services
- Black-on-Black Love
- Carl Sandburg Community College, Hill Correctional Center
- Catholic Charities
- Chicago City Wide Community College
- Chicago Housing Authority
- Chicago Legal Aid to Incarcerated Mothers
- Chicago Urban League
- City of Chicago, Traffic Division, Special Services
- Companions, Inc.
- Community Emergency Shelter Organization
- Cook County Jail
- Cook County Adult Probation Department
- Dawson Technical Institute
- Dearborn Homes
- Employment Plus
- Ex-offenders
- Gang Free/You & Me Program
- Golden Apple Foundation
- Good News Prison Ministry
- Groom for Success, Inc.
- H.E.L.P.S. Outreach Ministry
- Human Resource Development
- Illinois Chamber of Commerce
- Illinois Community College Board
- Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority
- Illinois Council on Vocational Education
- Illinois Dept. of Commerce and Community Affairs
- Illinois Dept. of Corrections, Community Services Division
- Illinois Dept. of Corrections, School District #428
- Illinois Dept. of Employment Security
- Illinois Dept. of Public Health
- Illinois State Board of Education
- Illinois State Representatives
- Illinois State Senators
- Inmate Alignment & Conditioning Training
- John Howard Association
- Kaskaskia Community College, Centralia Correctional Center
- Kennedy-King College
- Kinsey and Associates
- Kolbe House
- K. S. Associates
- Lambert and Associates
- Lindeman Center, Northern Illinois University
- Ma Houston Prison Outpost
- Men's and Correctional Service Bureau
- Mittman Productions, Inc.
- My Sister's Keeper Program

- Olive Harvey Community College
- Operation Push
- Parent Community Council
- Positive Anti-Crime Thrust
- Prison Action Committee
- Prison Fellowship Ministries
- Roosevelt University
- Southeastern Illinois Community College
- St. Leonard's House
- Support Advocates for Women
- The Safer Foundation
- The United Way
- Treatment Alternatives to Street Crime
- Triton Community College
- Urban Counseling & Training Centers
- Wendell Campbell Associates, Inc.
- Westside Veteran Community Center

THE SURVIVAL KIT

As a bonus for the successful completion of CNOR and LEAP, offenders qualify for a "Survival Kit," presented upon release. This concept was developed and implemented as a result of recommendations and surveys conducted within the CNOR advisory council membership and offenders.

The Survival kit includes such items as:

- City Map & Directory Denoting Services Available

  Employment
  Housing
  Transportation
  Health Care
  Emergency Food

- Anderson Financial Management Book
- Health and Beauty Aids
- Bible
- Clothing
- Positive Affirmations List
- Current Calendar
- Alarm Clock
- Wrist Watch
- Pens/Envelopes/Paper/Stamps
- Employment Portfolio
- Motivational/Educational Books

INCENTIVE AWARDS .. SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

Incentive awards are also made available to CNOR and LEAP project participants. For example, each eligible offender may receive a maximum of $100 in supportive services: dental work, eye glasses, rent, tools, drivers license fees, a maximum of $200 ($50 per week) during job search process, and a final award of $300 for employment which meets JTPA guidelines.

PRISON AND JAIL MINISTRY AWARENESS DAY

SIC-CED is assisting with the coordination of a statewide program - Prison and Jail Ministry Awareness Day - in cooperation with the Illinois Lutheran Social Services, Prison Fellowship, and area churches.

The purpose of a Prison and Jail Ministry Awareness Day is:

1. to increase community awareness and encourage community involvement,
2. to attract individuals that desire to help offenders mentors/volunteers,
3. to further educate existing mentors, volunteers, and agencies involved,
4. to strengthen the network of persons committed to the networking efforts.

The program agenda for the Prison and Jail Ministry Awareness Day offers oral presentations by persons involved: chaplains, offenders and ex-offenders (and their families), agencies, volunteers, mentors. Informational displays and handouts are made available throughout the day for the participants. Focus is placed on all phases of the criminal justice system, from pre-sentencing to probation, prison, and parole. Each presentation is shared by

an individual actively involved in a prison or jail ministry as a recipient or provider of services. Six Illinois sites have hosted or will host a Prison and Jail Ministry Awareness Day. These sites include Naperville, Chicago, Galesburg, Marion, Kankakee, and Springfield.

CHANGING LIVES...ONE PERSON AT A TIME

A standardized plan for release, transition, and success is impossible since each offender faces problems, barriers, and needs unique to him alone. An individualized plan for release, transition, education, career, and life is developed and updated as goals are met or changed.

For this reason, SIC-CED has adopted the motto "Changing Lives...One Person At A Time". This motto accurately reflects the personal approach utilized by SIC-CED.

TRACKING AND FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

An extremely important process within SIC-CED programming is the tracking and follow-up of ex-offenders. As offenders prepare for release through the individualized planning, a unique bond in formed. Mentors, staff, and ex-offenders continue to communicate long after release. Success stories and comments received during follow-up activities are shared with students and staff. Documentation is maintained and utilized to target additional services needed, program improvement, and as a motivation tool for correctional educators and students. Typically, an ex-offender does not have the desire to remain in contact with a correctional education

department following release. SIC-CED encourages an open line of communication long after release. Ex-offenders, their experiences, their successes and their failures are the foundation of SIC-CED's progress toward successful reintegration programs.

ABC WORLD NEWS .. THE AMERICAN AGENDA

Recently, SIC-CED was visited by ABC World News. During this visit ABC reviewed all facets of correctional education programming (academic, literacy, vocational, university, reintegration) offered at the Vienna Correctional Center and the Shawnee Correctional Centers.

ABC World News, The American Agenda, highlighted the "inside story" of correctional education programming followed by the "outside story" of an offender from release through community networking. This two-day, back-to-back news coverage has enlightened the public of positive educational advances in Illinois prisons and continues to attract the interest of other state corrections departments, social service agencies, prison ministries, volunteers and many community leaders.

SUMMARY

SIC-CED is nationally recognized for its innovative approaches to correctional education, correctional industries, transition, reintegration, research, and holistic correctional education programming. SIC-CED begins its involvement at the offender's institutional reception and continues this involvement through the community networking system upon release from the Illinois Department of Corrections.

The success of SIC-CED's individualized approach depends solely upon the commitment of all individuals involved. Improving the quality of life for the offender following fulfillment of the court sentence must remain the common goal. This commitment is enhanced by the coordination and collaboration of all human, financial, educational, and supportive service agency resources.

This cooperative effort is proving successful in reducing recidivism among offenders participating in the SIC-CED Life Skills Employment Awareness and Community Networking for Offender Reintegration Programs. "Changing Lives...One Person At A Time" is proving successful and is greatly enhancing the positive reintegration of offenders as they experience a happy and fulfilling "life after prison!"

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BIOGRAPHIES

BLACK, HARTZEL L.

Mr. Black is the Vice-President, Correctional Education Division, of Southeastern Illinois College. He manages college correctional education in four Southern Illinois correctional facilities. An strong advocate for offenders and their lives both in and out of the criminal justice system, Mr. Black's philosophy on reintegration and transition is nationally known. Through extensive work with community leaders, agencies, and offenders, he has raised public awareness of the need for communities to become involved with the criminal offender population. As past president of the International Correctional Education Association, he believes that positive, innovative and worthwhile correctional education programs can "Change Lives...One Person At A Time!"

TURNER, PAM G.

Working directly with the Vice-President of the Correctional Education Division of Southeastern Illinois College, Ms. Turner has been involved in correctional education for the past 20 years. Ms. Turner's involvement with reintegration of inmates and interagency coordination is known nationwide. She has conducted extensive follow-up of correctional education students. She has presented papers at national, regional, and state conferences. Ms. Turner has an oustanding rapport with inmates and staff while demonstrating a dedicated, caring approach to successful reintegration of inmates to society. Ms. Turner is intrinsically involved in a 14-county Illinois project that serves as both an alternative to incarceration and a reintegration program for ex-offenders returning to the southernmost area of Illinois.

WILLIAMS, JAMES A.

Jim Williams, network marketing specialist for Southeastern Illinois College, Correctional Education Division, works with the reintegration of offenders back to the workplace and the community. He has received national coverage on ABC World News Tonight with Peter Jennings. Mr. Williams is a key component in the SIC CED Project Team. He is dedicated to opening doors of opportunity for the criminal offender. Mr. Williams work directly with inmates leaving the Vienna and Shawnee Correctional Centers in the development of a reintegration plan to target barriers for a successful reintegration. He has also been instrumental in the development of a statewide Illinois council, Community Network for Offender Reintegration.